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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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EXCISE

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INFO NSCE 00,CIAE 00,SSO 00,DODE 00,USIE 00,NSAE 00,CCO 00,/070 W

P R 2412;0Z WQG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5289
INFO CINCPAC

Saigon 3931
8/24/67

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 3931

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC ATTITUDES

1. ON BASIS OF SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS AUGUST 24 WITH INFLUENTIAL SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN CLERICS, [ ] AND RECENT CONVERSATION WITH [ ] IT APPEARS THAT CATHOLIC OPINION IS STILL SWINGING BETWEEN PRESIDENTIAL SLATES HEADED BY GENERAL NGUYEN VAN THIEU AND TRAN VAN HUONG. WHEREAS AS RECENTLY AS A MONTH AGO ARCHBISHOP [ ] APPEARED TO BE SOLIDLY COMMITTED

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TO TRAN VAN HUONG, IT NOW SEEMS THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES MAY HAVE BEEN SWAYED BY THE STABILITY ARGUMENT AND NOW INCLINE TOWARD THE GENERALS.

2. [ ] AND DEDICATED CULHINCHINESE, STILL A.ORS HUONGW BUT HE IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT HIS CHANCES OF WINNING BECAUSE OF THE PLETHORA OF CIVILIAN CANDIDATES. HE ARGUES FORCEFULLY AGAINST FOUR MORE

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PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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YEARS OF THE MILITARY BECAUSE HE CONTENDS THAT PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS TOO VENAL AND CORRUPT AND THAT WHAT IS NEEDED IS AN ENTIRELY NEW DEAL, A "START FROM ZERO," IN HIS WORDS. AS FOR THE SENATE LISTS [redacted] FEELS THAT ALMOST ALL CATHOLICS WILL VOTE FOR LIST NO. 41 OF NGUYEN VAN HUYEN. AS FOR THE OTHER LISTS, HE PERSONALLY IS INCLINED AGAINST THE LIST OF NGUYEN GIA HIEN ("DAI DOAN KET") AND INSTEAD FAVORS MORE MODERATE, ECUMENICALLY-INCLINED CATHOLICS SUCH AS THOSE ON THE THANG TIEN LIST (NO.44) AND THE LIST OF NGUYEN VAN TRUONG. MORE THAN ONCE IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF [redacted] STATED POSITIVELY THAT GOVERNMENT OF VIET-NAM MUST BE PLACED IN THE HANDS OF THE COCOHINCHINESE AND THOSE ANNAMITES FROM BELOW THE 17TH PARALLEL. NATION HAS BEEN TOO LONG IN THE HANDS OF THE TONKINESE. b-1 ed

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3. [redacted] LONGTIME KY SUPPORTER FEELS THAT IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS PREPONDERANCE OF THE CATHOLIC VOTE WILL GO FOR THIEU AND KY. HE ADMITS THAT THERE IS STRONG SENTIMENT BOTH AMONG NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN CATHOLICS FOR TRAN VAN HUONG. DESPITE THIS, HE FEELS THAT THE FACT THAT THE GENERALS ARE INDENTIFIED WITH STABILITY AND CONTINUITY WILL INFLUENCE THE MAJORITY OF THE VOTE IN THEIR FAVOR. AS FOR SENATE LISTS, [redacted] SAID THAT HE HIMSELF WOULD VOTE FOR LAWYER HUYEN ("BECAUSE THE BISHOPS WANT ME TO"), NGUYEN GIA HIEN ("BECAUSE THEY ARE THE POLITICAL ACTIVISTS"), AND TRAN VAN LAM ("BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY TALENTED INDIVIDUALS ON THAT LIST"). HE SAYS THAT THE OTHER SO-CALLED CATHOLIC LISTS ARE YUOTTY AND UNDISTINGUISHED. YT FEELS THAT THE HUYEN LIST IS AN ODDS-ON FAVORITE TO WIN, BECAUSE IT WILL RECEIVE BOTH SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN CATHOLIC SUPPORT DUE LARGELY TO HSV AN'S GREAT REPUTATION FOR PROBITY.

4. AT ONE POINT IN THE CONVERSATION, [redacted] ASKED WHAT EMBOFFS ENVISAGED IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-ELECTION PERIOD. WHEN QUESTION WAS TURNED BACK ON HIM, [redacted] SAID THAT DUE PERHAPS TO HIS PESSIMISTIC NATURE, HE WAS FEARFUL OF THE POST-ELECTION PERIOD. ASSUMING A THIEU-KY VICTORY, HE EXPECTS

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DEMONSTRATIONS, RECRIMINATIONS ON THE PART OF THE DEFEATED CANDIDATES, TROUBLE OVER CERTIFICATION OF ELECTIONS RESULTS, AND OTHER DIFFICULTIES. MORE IMPORTANT, HE FEELS THAT HEAVY STRAIN WILL BE PLACED ON THE THIEU-KY RELATIONSHIP AND IF IMPORTANT FRICTIONS ARE TO BE AVOIDED, THE OTHER GENERALS MUST IMPOSE THEIR UNIFIED INFLUENCE ON THIEU AND KY TO FORCE THEM TO COLLABORATE CLOSELY. ACHIEVEMENT OF A CLOSE THIEU-KY WORKING RATIONSHIP IN THE POST-ELECTION PERIOD WILL ALSO DEPEND ON THE DAILY ADVICE AND COUNSEL OF THE U.S. EMBASSY. HE LAID PARTICULAR STRESS ON THIS. ASKED WHO WOULD BE THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD THIEU AND KY WIN, [redacted] SAID HE DID NOT KNOW, THOUGH HE WAS DISINCLINED TO BELIEVE IT WOULD BE NGUYEN VAN LOC. [redacted] DISMISSED LOC FROM CONSIDERATION SINCE HE IS KY'S "BOY".) ASKED WHETHER THIEU OR KY WOULD NAME THE PRIME MINISTER, [redacted] ADMITTED HAVING HEARD STORIES THAT A "DEAL" EXISTED WHICH GAVE THE REAL POWER TO KY TO APPOINT THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET. [redacted] FEELS THAT THIEU WILL CERTAINLY HAVE AN IMPORTANT SAY IN THE SELECTION OF THESE OFFICIALS; HE DOES NOT SEE HIM PLAYING A PURELY FIGUREHEAD ROLE. AT THE SAME [redacted] HE FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE A MAN OF KY'S ENERGY FILLING THE POWERLESS POST OF VICE PRESIDENT. THE ANOMALY OF THE NEW ROLES b-1 ed

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THIEU AND KY WILL ASSUME AFTER ELECTION IS OBVIOUSLY AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES WHICH MAY BE ENCOUNTERED IN THAT PERIOD.

5. [redacted] b-1 ed

[redacted] HIS OPINIONS ARE, THEREFORE, THOSE OF ONE WHO IS GENERALLY PRO-KY, BUT DESPITE THIS BIAS HIS VIEWS ON CATHOLIC ATTITUDES CAN PROBABLY BE CONSIDERED AS BEING FAIRLY OBJECTIVE.

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